

## **National Council on Family Relations Statement Concerning Families and Family Policy**

Families are the basic units of society and our most valuable resource. Healthy, well-functioning families provide members of all ages with rewarding, caring relationships, and with essential mutual support which is sustaining throughout the life course. Families are the major producers and consumers of goods and services. They make a central contribution to the nation's present and future workforce and enhance the quality of our society. Conversely, society has a critical effect on families. Therefore, it is essential that family policy makers recognize the reciprocal influences that families and society have upon each other.

Family members are best able to perform their vital caring functions when their own basic social, psychological, physical, spiritual, and economic needs are being met. Children develop into competent, productive, loved and loving adults with devoted and sustained parenting. The later years of life are made more productive and satisfying when families are empowered with the resources to provide support and care as it is needed. Strong families provide intimacy, security and commitment to their members and need to be supported, not supplanted in their care giving roles throughout the life course.

Well-formulated family policies empower family members to perform their functions and to meet their individual and family needs. These policies provide resources and help create environments that prevent or ameliorate societal conditions that seriously threaten or diminish familial competence. Effective policies and practice are implemented through well-financed, appropriately staffed programs and organizations at local, state and federal levels which are consciously designed to take into account the pluralism and rich diversity of American family structures and life styles. All public policies no matter how seemingly unrelated to family life, must be evaluated in terms of their intended or unintended impacts on family functioning.

Policy-oriented, applied, and basic research on families can help to identify the aspects of public policy, societal and familial conditions that warrant action to protect families and individuals. Members of the National Council on Family Relations contribute to families and sound family policies in a variety of ways. These include, but are not limited to:

- Research: On the course of family life and its challenges.
- Publication: Of findings, theory and program and policy analysis.
- Family life education: In formal and informal settings, training and certification.
- Practice: Provision of professional guidance, counseling and therapy.
- Program: Development and evaluation of programs designed to enhance family well-being.
- Consultancy: Translator of research for action, programs and policy.
- Advocacy: For sound family policies and programs at local, state, federal and international levels.

Written by the Public Policy Committee and amended and passed by the NCFR Board April, 1993.